MANDRAGOLA

Dramatis Personae

CALLIMACO, a young merchant
SIRO, his servant
MESSER NICIA, an old judge, husband of LUCRETIA
LIGURIO, a parasite
SOSTRATA, LUCRETIA'S mother
FRATE TIMOTEO, a wicked cleric
A WOMAN
LUCRETIA, wife of MESSER NICIA, loved by CALLIMACO

CANZONE

[*to be spoken before the comedy, sung by nymphs and shepherds together*]

Because life is short
and many are the pains
that every man bears who lives and stints himself,
let us go on spending and wasting the years as we will,
for he who deprives himself of pleasure
only to live with labor and toil
does not understand the world's deceits,
and what ills and what strange events
crush almost all mortals.

To avoid such discontent
we have chosen secluded life,
and always in merry-making and gladness
we live as gallant young men and happy nymphs.
Now we have come here with our harmony
only to honor this merry festival
and this sweet company.

We are brought here besides
by the name of him who rules you,[1]

1. *Francesco Guicciardini. In 1526, when he was papal governor of Romagna, a performance of* MANDRAGOLA *before him at Faenza or Modena was planned but not carried out. The* intermezzi *were written for it.*

in whom may be seen all virtues
that unite in the Countenance Eternal.
For such sovereign grace,
for so fortunate a condition,
you can feel happy and rejoice,
and thank him who gives it to you.

PROLOG

God bless you, well-wishing hearers, since it appears that these good wishes depend on our pleasing you. If you continue to make no noise, we shall tell you of a strange event that happened in this city. Look at the scenery that now is put before you: this is your Florence; another time it will be Rome or Pisa—a thing to make you laugh till you crack your cheeks.

This door here on my right opens into the house of a judge who learned in Buethius a great deal of law.[1] That street which is fitted into that corner there is the Street of Love,[2] where he who tumbles never gets up again. Then you can learn from his friar's dress what sort of prior or abbot lives at the church on the opposite side, if you don't leave this place too soon.

Callimaco Guadagni, a young man just arrived from Paris, lives there at that door on the left. He, above all the other smart young fellows, shows the marks and signs of carrying off the honors and the prize for courtesy. He greatly loved a prudent young woman and tricked her, as you will learn, and I hope you'll be tricked as she was.

The story is called *Mandragola*. You will see the reason when it is acted, I foretell. The writer is not very famous, yet if you do not laugh,[3] he will be ready to pay for your wine. A doleful lover, a judge by no means shrewd, a friar living wickedly, a parasite the darling of Malice will be sport for you today.

And if this material—since really it is slight—does not befit a

1. *I have rendered* Doctor *(of law) by* Judge, *to distinguish Nicia from the (pretended) physician, who is called* Messer.

Buetio *(not* Boetio, *Boethius), beginning with the word* bue, *meaning* ox, *a symbol of stupidity, presents Messer Nicia as stupid. As a student of law, Nicia would have read Boethius.*

2. *Street of Love: The Via dell'Amore, now included in Via Sant' Antonio, extended from the present Piazza dell'Unita Italiana to Via Faenza. But it seems unlikely that Machiavelli intends the name to be taken literally.*

3. *If he fails to make you laugh.*

man who likes to seem wise and dignified, make this excuse for him, that he is striving with these trifling thoughts to make his wretched life more pleasant, for otherwise he doesn't know where to turn his face, since he has been cut off from showing other powers with other deeds, there being no pay for his labors.

The pay he expects is that every man will stand aside and sneer, speaking ill of whatever he sees or hears. This is the reason, beyond all doubt, why from ancient worth the present age in every way is degenerate; for, seeing that everybody censures, men do not labor and strain to turn out with a thousand hardships a work that the wind will spoil and the fog conceal.

Yet if anyone supposes that by finding fault he can get the author by the hair and scare him or make him draw back a bit, I give any such man warning and tell him that the author, too, knows how to find fault, and that it was his earliest art; and in no part of the world where *sì*[4] is heard does he stand in awe of anybody, even though he plays the servant to such as can wear a better cloak than he can.

But let all those find fault who care to. We must get back to our theme, so we won't run over our time too far. We can't pay attention to words or respect some freak who doesn't know, perhaps, whether he's still alive. Callimaco is coming out, and with him he has his servant, Siro, and he will tell the situation in full. Pay attention, all of you, and for the present don't expect any other summary.

4. sì: Indicating the Italian language.

I.1

CALLIMACO, SIRO

CALLIMACO. Siro, don't go away; I want you for a bit.

SIRO. Yes, sir.

CAL. I suppose you were puzzled when I left Paris in such a hurry and you're still puzzled, since I've been here a month already without doing a thing.

SIRO. It's true that I am.

CAL. If up to this time I haven't told you what I'm going to tell you now, it hasn't been because I don't trust you, but because it's my opinion that if a man doesn't want things known, he'd better not tell

them, unless he has to. But since I've decided I need your help, I want to tell you all about it.

SIRO. I'm your servant, and servants ought never to ask their masters questions about anything or pry into their business, but when the masters themselves tell them, they ought to serve them faithfully; and so I've done and so I'm going to do.

CAL. I'm sure of it. I believe you've heard me say a thousand times, but there's no harm in your hearing it a thousand and one, that when I was ten years old my guardians, since my father and my mother were dead, sent me to Paris, where I've lived twenty years. And because, at the end of ten years, the expedition of King Charles set going in Italy the wars that ruined this country, I decided to spend my life in Paris and never go back home, judging I'd be safer in that city than here,

SIRO. So you would be.

CAL. and arranging here to sell all my property, except my house, I committed myself to staying there, and there I have lived for the last ten years in complete happiness,

SIRO. Yes, I know you have.

CAL. laying out my time, partly in studies, partly in amusement, partly in business; and I employed myself in each of these in such fashion that one didn't keep me away from the other. And the result, as you know, was that I lived in the greatest peace, getting on well with everybody and trying not to make any enemies, so that I seemed to be in favor with the middle class, the gentlemen, the foreigner, the native, the poor, the rich.

SIRO. That's so.

CAL. But since Fortune decided that I was having too much good weather, she brought a certain Cammillo Calfucci to Paris.

SIRO. I'm beginning to guess your trouble.

CAL. Like the other Florentines, he often dined with me; and in the course of our talks, it happened one day that we got to arguing where the women were more beautiful, in Italy or in France. And because I couldn't discuss Italian women, having been so little when I went away, another Florentine who was there took the French side, and Cammillo the Italian. Then, after many arguments had been brought up on both sides, Cammillo, almost as though he were angry, said that even if all other Italian women were frights, a single one, a relative of his, was enough to get back their reputation.

SIRO. Now I'm clear about what you're going to say.

CAL. And he named Madam Lucretia, the wife of Messer Nicia Calfucci, and gave her such praise for beauty and manners that we were all spellbound, and in me he roused such eagerness to see her that, letting every other plan go, and paying no more attention to the wars or to the peace of Italy, I set out for this place. Now that I'm here, I've found Madam Lucretia's reputation much less than the truth—something that very seldom happens—and I'm on fire with such longing to be with her that I never have any peace.

SIRO. If you'd mentioned it to me in Paris, I should have known how to advise you, but now I don't know what to tell you.

CAL. I've not told you this to get your advice but partly to express my feelings, and so you can get yourself ready to help me when I need you.

SIRO. I'm quite ready for that, but what hopes do you have?

CAL. Hopes! None or very few. I'll explain. First, the nature of the woman fights against me, because she's very chaste and a complete stranger to love dealings. Her husband is very rich and lets her rule him entirely, and if he isn't young, he isn't altogether an old man, as I guess. She has no relatives or neighbors that she meets at parties or entertainments or any of the other amusements that young women like. No tradespeople get into her house; she has no maid or servant who's not afraid of her; so there's no chance for bribery.

SIRO. What do you think you can do then?

CAL. Nothing is ever so hopeless that there isn't some means that lets one hope for it, and even though it's poor and weak, still a man's resolve and eagerness to carry the affair through keep it from seeming so.

SIRO. Well then, what makes you hope?

CAL. Two things. One is Messer Nicia's stupidity, for though he's a judge, he's the stupidest and silliest man in Florence. The other is that both of them long to have children, for after being married six years and still not having any, and being very rich,[1] they are so eager for them that they are dying of it. There's a third thing, that her mother has been a lively dame, but she's rich,[2] so I don't know how to handle her.

1. *Their riches made them well able to provide for children. Poor families often felt daughters a burden because of the dowries required to marry them well.*

2. *Hence bribes won't interest her.*

SIRO. Up to now have you tried to do anything about it?
CAL. Yes, I have, but not of much account.
SIRO. In what way?
CAL. You know Ligurio, who's always coming to eat with me. He was once a marriage broker and later took to begging suppers and dinners. And because he's an amusing man, Messer Nicia is very intimate with him—though Ligurio bamboozles him—and even if he doesn't invite him to eat with him, he does sometimes lend him money. I've made myself his friend and told him about my love. He's promised to help me with all his might.
SIRO. Watch out that he doesn't trick you; these gluttons usually aren't very reliable.
CAL. That's true. All the same, when a thing's to a man's advantage, you can believe, if you take him into your confidence, that he'll give you honest service. I've promised, if he succeeds, to give him a lot of money; if he doesn't succeed, he'll get a luncheon and a supper out of it, which anyhow I wouldn't have eaten alone.
SIRO. What's he promised to do, so far?
CAL. He's promised to induce Messer Nicia to take his wife to the baths this May.
SIRO. How does that help you?
CAL. How does it help me? That place might change her nature, because in such spots people do nothing but amuse themselves. I should go there and take part in amusements of every sort I could, and shouldn't omit any sort of display. I should get on good terms with her and her husband. How can I tell? One thing brings on another, and Time works wonders.[3]
SIRO. It doesn't seem bad to me.
CAL. Ligurio left me this morning and said he'd interview Messer Nicia on the subject and let me know about it.
SIRO. There they come together.
CAL. I want to step to one side, so as to be ready to talk with Ligurio when he gets away from the Judge. Meanwhile you go into the house about your business, and if I want you to do anything I'll tell you.
SIRO. I'll be ready.

3. *The Italian proverb,* Di cosa nasce cosa, e il Tempo la governa, *has no English equivalent. Literally: "A thing comes from a thing, and Time controls it." Callimaco hopes that Time will bring him an opportunity.*

I.2

MESSER NICIA, LIGURIO

MESSER NICIA. I believe your advice is good, and I spoke to my wife about it last evening. She said she'd answer me today, but to tell the truth, I shan't go there on willing legs.

LIGURIO. Why so?

MESSER N. Because I don't like to get off base.[1] Then to have to shift quarters with wife, servant, household things—it doesn't suit me. Besides that, I talked last evening with some doctors. One of them said I should go to San Filippo, another to Porretta, another to Villa; and they seem to me so many big fools; for to tell the truth these doctors of medicine don't know what they're fishing for.

LIG. Yet what you spoke of first is bound to worry you, for you aren't in the habit of letting the Cupola[2] out of your sight.

MESSER N. You're wrong. When I was younger, I was a great gadabout. Why, they never held the fair at Prato without my going there, and there isn't a single town all around where I haven't been. And I can say more too; I have been at Pisa and at Livorno—think of that.

LIG. You must have seen the *carrucola* of Pisa.[3]

MESSER N. You mean the Verrucola.[4]

LIG. Oh, yes, the Verrucola. At Livorno did you see the sea?

1. *A figure taken from a children's game, somewhat like prisoner's base. Cf. Pulci,* MORGANTE *1. 32; 2. 8; 19. 70; 27. 39.*

2. *The dome of the Cathedral, still the "Hupola" to Tuscans.*

3. *Apparently a joke at Nicia's expense, having some connection with the use of* carrucola *(literally,* pulley*) to mean a foolish man. Paulus Jovius, writing of the* MANDRAGOLA, *says that Nicia was turned into a* currucola *(a variant form of* carrucola*) by his young wife (*FRAGMENTUM TRIUM DIALOGORUM, *quoted by Tommasini,* MACHIAVELLI, *I, 645).*

4. *One of the summits of Monte Pisano, near Pisa, is Monte Verruca (the Wart), on the summit of which the ruins of a fortress, the Verrucola (the Little Wart), are still to be seen. Its importance to Florence in the campaigns against Pisa is indicated by the following on the operations in 1503 of the Florentine forces led by Giacomini: "They marched against the Verrucola, which, because of revealing the raids of the Florentines—since it was situated in a high place—and giving notice of them to the Pisans, had almost continually been a thorn in the eyes of the Republic, and therefore in all this war, though in vain, she had attempted with every effort to get it. But not at this time being able to withstand the artillery, which on account of the roughness of the mountains had been taken there with great difficulty (or this may have been an excuse to hide the cowardice of the defenders) the fortress surrendered." (Scipio Ammirato,* HISTORY OF FLORENCE, *bk. 28).*

The Verrucola is indicated as blocking retreat toward Florence in Machiavelli's HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS, *Dec., 1497. See also his* DISCOURSE ON PISAN AFFAIRS.

MESSER N. You know I did.
LIG. How much bigger than the Arno is it?
MESSER N. Than the Arno? It's four times, more than six, more than seven, you'll make me say; and you don't see anything but water, water, water.
LIG. I wonder, then, since you have pissed in so many snowbanks,[5] that you make such a fuss about going to the baths.
MESSER N. Your mouth's full of milk.[6] Does it seem to you just a joke to have to upset the whole house? Yet I'm so eager to have children that I'm ready to do anything. But talk about it a bit with these doctors; see where they advise me to go. Meanwhile I'll see my wife and come back here.
LIG. That's a good idea.

5. pissed in so many snowbanks: visited so many places.
6. You talk like a baby.

I.3

LIGURIO, CALLIMACO

LIGURIO [*to himself*]. I don't believe there's a stupider man in the world than this fellow; yet how Fortune has favored him! He's rich; he has a beautiful wife, virtuous, courteous, and fit to rule a kingdom. It seems to me that in marriages the proverb doesn't very often come true that says: God makes men, and they find their mates. Because often you see an able man chance upon an ass, and, vice versa, a sensible woman get a fool. But from this fellow's silliness we get the benefit that Callimaco can have hopes. But there he is. [*to Callimaco*] What are you looking for, Callimaco?
CALLIMACO. I saw you with the Judge and I was waiting until you got away from him, to find out what you've done.
LIG. You know what sort of man he is, of little sense, of less spirit, and he doesn't want to go away from Florence. Yet I urged him on, and at last he told me he'd do everything. And I believe that if his going away pleases us, we'll bring him to it, but I don't know whether we'll finish our business there.
CAL. Why?
LIG. How can I be sure? You know that all kinds of people go to these baths, and a man might come there who'd be as taken with

Madam Lucretia as you are, who would have more money than you do, would be more charming than you are. So there's danger of your going to this trouble for somebody else; and it may happen that the crowd of rivals will make her harder to get, or if she softens, she'll get a liking for some other man, not for you.

CAL. I know that what you say's true. But what can I do? What plan can I take up? Where shall I turn? I've got to try something, even if it's strange, risky, injurious, disgraceful. It's better to die than to live as I do. If I could sleep at night, if I could eat, if I could talk, if I could get pleasure out of anything, I'd wait for the right time with more patience. But now there's nothing I can do, and if I don't keep my hopes up by deciding on something, I shall certainly die, and seeing I've got to die, I'm not afraid of anything; I'll try any plan whatever, even if it's stupid, cruel, wicked.

LIG. Don't talk like that; check your runaway feelings.

CAL. You see well enough that I feed on such fancies because I'm trying to check them. So we've got to go ahead with sending him to the baths or try some other way, so I can feed myself with a little hope—if not true then false—that will let me keep alive some fancy that will do a little to lighten my sufferings.

LIG. You're right, and I'm in favor of doing it.

CAL. I believe it, though I know that such as you live by cheating men. Yet I believe I can't be counted among your dupes, for if you did cheat me and I found it out, I'd try to get revenge for it, and at once you'd lose the use of my house and the hope of getting what I've promised you for the future.

LIG. Don't be afraid that I'm not reliable, because even if there weren't as much profit in the business as I think and hope, you and I have a natural affinity, and I want you to carry out your wish almost as much as you do yourself. But enough of that. The Judge has engaged me to find a doctor and learn to what baths they'd better go. I want you to do as I suggest, and that is, say you've studied medicine and 've had some experience in Paris. He'll easily believe it, because he's so foolish and you're educated and can say something to him in Latin.

CAL. What help'll that be?

LIG. It'll help us send him to any baths we choose, and to apply some other schemes I've thought up, which will be shorter, more certain, more likely to succeed than the baths.

CAL. What's that you're saying?
LIG. I'm saying that if you keep your spirits up and trust in me, I'll finish this business for you before tomorrow at this time. And even if he were the man he isn't and would investigate whether you're a doctor or not, the shortness of the time and the business itself will keep him from discussing it, or there'll not be time to spoil our plan even if he does discuss it.[1]
CAL. You're restoring me to life. This is too big a promise, and you're feeding me too much hope. What'll you do?
LIG. You'll find out when the time comes; just now I can't properly tell you, because there won't be time for doing, much less telling. You go into the house and wait for me there, and I'll go and find the Judge, and if I bring him to you, go along with what I say and adapt yourself to it.
CAL. I'll do it, though you fill me with hope that I'm afraid 'll go up in smoke.

1. *Ligurio guards against the revelation of this comic conspiracy. Cf.* DISCOURSES *3. 6.*

CANZONE

[after the first act]

He who makes no test, Oh Love,
of your great power,
must hope in vain ever to have true faith
in Heaven's highest worth.
He does not know how at the same time
one can live and die,
how one can search for ill and run away from good,
how one can love oneself less than some other,
how often the heart is frozen and melted by fear and hope;
he does not know how men and gods in equal measure
dread the weapons with which you're armed.

II.1

LIGURIO, MESSER NICIA, SIRO

LIGURIO. As I've told you, I believe God has sent him so you can have all you wish. He's given the strongest proofs in Paris, and you

shouldn't think it strange he hasn't practiced his profession in Florence, because there are reasons for it. First, he's rich; second, at any moment he's likely to return to Paris.

MESSER NICIA. You're right, brother, that's very important; because I shouldn't like to have him take me into the woods and then leave me high and dry.

LIG. Don't worry about that; the only thing to be afraid of is that he won't accept the case; but if he does accept it, he certainly won't leave you until he sees it through.

MESSER N. For that part of it I'm willing to trust you. But as to his knowledge, I'll tell you myself, after I talk with him, whether he's a learned man, because he won't sell me any bubbles.[1]

LIG. And because I know what you are, I'm taking you to him so you can talk with him. And if after you've talked with him, it doesn't seem to you that in bearing, in learning, in speech he is a man in whose lap you can lay your head, say I'm not Ligurio.

MESSER N. So be it, in the name of the Holy Angel. Let's be going. But where does he live?

LIG. He lives on this square, at that door you see opposite yours.

MESSER N. Go ahead.

LIG. Done. [*knocking*]

SIRO. Who's there?

LIG. Is Callimaco at home?

SIRO. Yes, he is.

MESSER N. Why don't you say Doctor Callimaco?

LIG. He doesn't care about such nonsense.

MESSER N. Don't call it that; do the right thing yourself, and if he doesn't like it, let him loosen his belt.[2]

1. *Or inflated bladders, or balloons. The expression is explained by Varchi (*ERCOLANO *98) as meaning to tell as certain something not certain.*

2. *let him loosen his belt: seemingly equivalent to "let him lump it." Cf.* THE [GOLDEN] ASS, *chap. 1 end. In Lorenzo Lippi's* MALMANTILE RACQUISTATO *3. 47, the saying occurs as "let him tighten his belt" (*cinga *for* scinga*), apparently with the same meaning as here.*

II.2

CALLIMACO, MESSER NICIA, LIGURIO

CALLIMACO. Who is this man who wants me?

MESSER NICIA. *Bona dies, domine magister.*

CAL. *Et vobis bona, domine doctor.*[1]
LIGURIO [*to* NICIA]. How does he seem?
MESSER N. [*to* LIGURIO]. Fine, by the Apostles.
LIG. If you want me to stay here with you, you'll have to speak so I can understand you; otherwise we'll make two fires.[2]
CAL. Are you on pleasant business?
MESSER N. I don't know. I'm hunting for two things that another man most likely would run away from: that is, to make trouble for myself and for others. I haven't any children and want some, so in order to have such a trouble I come to worry you.
CAL. It'll never bother me to do a favor to you or to any man so able and worthy as you are. And I've not worked at my studies so many years in Paris for any other reason than to be able to help such men as you.
MESSER N. Many thanks. And when you're in need of my profession, I'll be glad to help you. But let's get back *ad rem nostram.* Have you thought what bath would be good to help my wife become pregnant? For I know Ligurio has told you what you need to know about this affair.
CAL. So he has. But in order to satisfy your wish, I must know the cause of your wife's sterility, for there can be many causes. *Nam causae sterilitatis sunt aut in semine, aut in matrice, aut in strumentis seminariis, aut in virga, aut in causa extrinseca.*[3]
MESSER N. This is the ablest man there is.
CAL. Besides these, you could be the cause of this sterility, through impotence; and if that were so, there would be nothing we could do.
MESSER N. Me impotent? Why, you make me laugh, I don't believe there is a tougher and healthier man in Florence than I am.
CAL. If that's not it, you can feel certain we shall find a cure.
MESSER N. Isn't there some other cure than baths? Because I don't want that bother, and my wife doesn't like going away from Florence.
LIG. Yes, there is. Let me give the answer. Callimaco is much too cautious. [*to* CALLIMACO] Haven't you told me you know how to make up some medicines that without any question will cause pregnancy?

1. Bona dies, *etc. How do you do, Doctor? And how do you do, Judge?*
2. *make two fires separate.*
3. *For the causes of sterility are either in the semen, or in the womb, or in the seminal organs, or in the penis, or in an extrinsic cause.*

CAL. Yes, I have. But I go slowly with men I don't know, because I don't want them to think I'm a quack.
MESSER N. Don't have any fears about me, because you've amazed me so much that there is nothing I wouldn't believe or do if you had a hand in it.
LIG. I believe you'll have to see a specimen.
CAL. Certainly; nothing can be done without one.
LIG. Call Siro, and let him go with the Judge to his house for it and come back here; and we'll wait for it in your house.
CAL. Siro, go with him. And if it's convenient, sir, come back here soon and we'll consider what's best.
MESSER N. What's that? If it's convenient! I'll be back in a minute, for I have more faith in you than the Hungarians have in their swords.[4]

4. Apparently proverbial.

II.3

MESSER NICIA, SIRO

MESSER NICIA. This master of yours is a wonderful man.
SIRO. Even more so than you say.
MESSER N. The King of France must set store by him.
SIRO. Much.
MESSER N. And for that reason he must be glad to live in France.
SIRO. Of course he is.
MESSER N. And he's right. In this city there's not a man who isn't a shitsticks; ability isn't valued. If he should stay here, there wouldn't be a man who would pay any attention to him. I'm in a position to talk about it, for I've shit out my guts in order to learn two aitches,[1] and if I had to live by it, I should be out in the cold, I can tell you.
SIRO. Do you make a hundred ducats a year?
MESSER N. Not a hundred lire, not a hundred grossi, believe it or not! And the reason is that a man who doesn't have a pull with the government of this city,[2] though of my standing, can't find a dog to

1. Tommaseo's DIZIONARIO *explains this as meaning to learn a little, since H is not important in Italian. Though this form, as well as the learning of four aitches, is said to be common, the only example given is this from* MANDRAGOLA.

*2. Nicia's words (*chi non ha lo stato in questa terra*) suggest a stronger meaning, such as* control the government, *hardly warranted by the situation. Lorenzo de' Medici, writing that*

bark at him, and we're good for nothing but to go to funerals and to meetings about some marriage, or to sit all day dawdling on the Proconsul's bench.[3] But I don't pay any attention to them, I'm not dependent on anybody; let those do it who are worse off than I am. All the same, I don't want to be quoted, because I should certainly get some big tax or some leek in my tail[4] that would make me sweat.

SIRO. Never fear.

MESSER N. This is my house. Wait here; I'll be back right away.

SIRO. Go ahead.

*he accepted the direction of Florentine affairs in order to preserve his friends and his property, writes that one can hardly live in Florence without control of the government (*si può mal vivere ricco senza lo stato*) (Roscoe,* LIFE OF LORENZO, *Appendix 12).*

3. This seems proverbial for long waiting on the convenience of an arbitrary bureaucrat.

4. leek in my tail: trouble would be made for me.

II.4

SIRO, *alone*

If the other judges were like this one, we should take stones for ovens.[1] Yes, for this wretched Ligurio and this crazy master of mine are getting him into a place where they'll disgrace him. And truly I'd wish it, if I thought it wouldn't be found out, because if it is found out, I'll be in danger of my life, and my master of his life and property. He's even become a doctor. I don't know what their plan is and where this trick is leading. But I see the Judge with a specimen bottle in his hand. Who wouldn't laugh at this big fool?

1. take stones for ovens: Machiavelli himself explained it in a letter to Guicciardini in Sept. 1525 (p. 983) as meaning "act like crazy men."

II.5

MESSER NICIA, SIRO

MESSER NICIA [*to* LUCRETIA, *inside the house, and then to himself*]. I've always done things your way; now I want you to do them in mine. If I'd thought I wasn't going to have children, I'd sooner have married a country girl, who—[1] [*to* SIRO] Is that you, Siro? Follow

1. I have followed what seems indicated by the first edition, not followed by modern editors. Nicia is mumbling to himself, and breaks off on seeing Siro. Girolamo Ruscelli, in his edition (Venice, 1554), gives a text to be translated: I'd sooner have married a country girl than you. Is that you, Siro?

me. What trouble I've gone through to make this silly woman give me this specimen! And that doesn't mean that she doesn't want to have children, for she's more anxious about it than I am, but when I try to get her to do some little thing, what a business!

SIRO. Be patient; with gentle words you can usually get a woman where you want her to go.

MESSER N. Gentle words! After she's riled me! Be quick, go and tell the Doctor and Ligurio that I'm here.

SIRO. There they are, coming out of the house.

II.6

LIGURIO, CALLIMACO, MESSER NICIA

LIGURIO [*to* CALLIMACO]. The judge'll be easy to persuade. His wife'll give trouble, but we'll find a way.

CALLIMACO [*to* NICIA]. Have you the specimen?

MESSER NICIA. Siro has it, under his cloak.

CAL. Give it here. Hmm, this specimen shows weakness of the kidneys.

MESSER N. It looks rather cloudy to me; yet she just passed it.

CAL. Don't think it strange. *Nam mulieris urinae sunt semper maioris grossitici et albedinis, et minoris pulchritudinis, quam virorum. Hujus autem, in caetera, causa est amplitudo canalium, mixtio eorum quae ex matrice exeunt cum urina.*[1]

MESSER N. [*aside*]. Uh, huh, San Puccio's cunt! This man gets better and better the more I deal with him; see how well he talks about these things.

CAL. I'm afraid she's poorly covered at night, and that makes her pass cloudy urine.

MESSER N. She always has a good blanket over her. But she does keep kneeling four hours to string off paternosters before she gets into bed, and acts like a fool about getting chilly.

CAL. Well then, Judge, either you have faith in me or you haven't; either I can tell you of a sure cure or I can't. On my side, I'll give you the medicine. If you have faith in me, you'll accept it. Then if,

1. *"For the urine of women is always of more thickness and whiteness and of less beauty than that of men. Now, among other things, the cause of this is the large size of the canals, the mixture of those things that go out of the womb with the urine."*

what the King of France has done, and all the lords in that country?
MESSER N. Whom do you suppose I could find to do such a crazy thing? If I tell him, he won't do it. If I don't tell him, I victimize him, and that's a matter for the Eight.[4] I don't want to get into trouble in that quarter.
CAL. If that's all you're worried about, let me take care of it for you.
MESSER N. How'll you do it?
CAL. I'll tell you. I'll give you the medicine this evening after supper. You give it to her to take and put her to bed at once, which will be about ten o'clock. Then we'll disguise ourselves, you, Ligurio, Siro, and myself, and we'll go hunting in the New Market, the Old Market, all through such places. And as soon as we find an idle young fellow, we'll pull a sack over his head, and to the music of blows, we'll take him into your house and into your bedroom in the dark. There we'll put him in the bed and tell him what he's got to do, and there'll be no difficulty at all. Then in the morning you'll send him off before day, have your wife bathe, and you can be with her at your pleasure and without danger.
MESSER N. I'm satisfied, since you say that kings and princes and lords have used this method. But above everything else, don't let it be known, because of the Eight.
CAL. Who do you suppose will tell it?
MESSER N. One difficulty is left, and it's important.
CAL. What is it?
MESSER N. To get my wife to consent, for I don't believe she'll ever make up her mind to it.
CAL. You're right. But I hope I shall never be a husband if I can't get my wife to do what I want.
LIG. I've thought of a scheme.
MESSER N. What is it?
LIG. Through her confessor.
CAL. [*to* LIGURIO]. Who'll get the confessor to do it?
LIG. [*to* CALLIMACO]. You, I, money, our rascality, theirs.
MESSER N. If nothing more, I'm afraid that for anything I say she won't be willing to talk with her confessor.
LIG. And there's a scheme for that too.
CAL. Out with it!
LIG. To have her mother take her to him.

4. for the Eight: for the Criminal Court.

MESSER N. She has faith in her.
LIG. And I know her mother is on our side. Come on, let's not waste time; it's getting toward evening. You go and amuse yourself, Callimaco, and see to it that at eight o'clock we find you in your house with the medicine ready. We'll go to her mother's house, the Judge and I, to get her to help us, for I know her. Then we'll go to the Friar, and we'll report to you what we've done.
CAL. [*to* LIGURIO]. Oh, don't leave me alone.
LIG. [*to* CALLIMACO]. You act drunk.
CAL. [*to* LIGURIO]. Where do you want me to go now?
LIG. [*to* CALLIMACO]. This way, that way, along this street, along that one; Florence is a big town.
CAL. [*aside*]. This is killing me.

CANZONE

[*after the second act*]

Everybody knows how happy he is
who is born stupid and believes everything.
Ambition does not disturb him,
fear does not upset him—
those two that ever are the seeds
of pain and discontent.
This judge of yours,
in hope to have children,
will believe that an ass can fly;
and everything else he has wholly forgotten,
and only on this has set his desire.

III.1

SOSTRATA, MESSER NICIA, LIGURIO

SOSTRATA. I've always heard that it's the part of a prudent man to take the best among bad choices.[1] If for having children you don't know any other way, then you'll have to accept this one, if it doesn't burden the conscience.

1. *Found in* PRINCE *21 and elsewhere. See Index:* Evils, choice of.

MESSER NICIA. Just so.
LIGURIO. Now you go and talk with your daughter, and the Judge and I'll go and talk with Fra Timoteo, her confessor, and tell him the story, so you'll not have to tell him. You'll see what he'll say to you.
SOST. All right, I'll do it. Your road takes you that way, but I'm going to see Lucretia, and I'll bring her to speak with the Friar, no matter what.

III.2

MESSER NICIA, LIGURIO

MESSER NICIA. Perhaps you think it strange, Ligurio, that we have to tell so many stories to get my wife to consent, but if you knew everything you wouldn't think it strange.
LIGURIO. I believe the reason is that all women are timorous.
MESSER N. That's not it. She used to be the sweetest person in the world and the most accommodating, but a neighbor of ours told her she'd become pregnant if she vowed to hear the first mass at the Servi[1] for forty mornings, and she made her vow and went there twenty mornings or so. Then you know one of those nasty friars began to hang around her, so she didn't want to go back there any more. It certainly is a bad thing, though, that those who ought to set us good examples should be of that sort. Isn't that so?
LIG. Hell, yes, if it's true.
MESSER N. From that time on she's had ears like a rabbit, and when almost nothing is said to her, she finds a thousand difficulties in it.
LIG. I don't think it strange any more. But that vow, how was it carried out?
MESSER N. We had it dispensed.
LIG. That's good. But if you have them, give me twenty-five ducats, for in an affair like this, one has to spend money and make the Friar one's friend in a hurry and give him hope of more.
MESSER N. Here, take them. This doesn't worry me, I can economize somewhere.

1. *The church of the Servites (Servi di Maria), Santissima Annunziata. See* ARTICLES FOR A PLEASURE COMPANY, *par. 9.*

LIG. These friars are knavish, crafty, and it's not strange, because they know our sins and their own. A man who isn't used to them could make a mistake and fail to get one of them to do what he wants. So I hope you won't spoil everything by talking, because a man in your station, who sits all day in his study, understands just books, and can't manage practical affairs. [*aside*] This fellow is so stupid I'm afraid he'll spoil everything.
MESSER N. Tell me what you want me to do.
LIG. Leave the talking to me, and don't say a single word unless I give you a sign.
MESSER N. I agree. What sign will you make?
LIG. I'll close one eye, bite my lip. Oh, no. We'll do differently. How long is it since you spoke to the Friar?
MESSER N. More than ten years.
LIG. That's good: I'll tell him you've got deaf, and you'll not answer and never say anything unless we speak very loud.
MESSER N. I'll do it.
LIG. Don't be worried if I say some things that seem to you different from what we want, because it'll all fit in.
MESSER N. All right.

III.3

FRATE TIMOTEO, A WOMAN

FRATE TIMOTEO. If you want to confess, I'm at your service.
WOMAN. Not today. Somebody's waiting for me, and it's enough for me to have let out a bit right here like this. Have you said those masses of Our Lady?
FRATE. Yes, madam.
WOMAN. Now take this florin, and every Monday for two months say the mass of the dead for the soul of my husband. And though he was a bad one, yet the flesh does pull. I can't help mourning when I think about him. But do you believe he's in Purgatory?
FRATE. There's no doubt of it.
WOMAN. I'm not at all sure he is. You know what he did to me sometimes. Oh, how much I complained about him to you! I kept away from him as much as I could, but he was so pressing. Oh, good Lord!

FRATE. Have no fears. The mercy of God is great; if a man doesn't lack the will, time for repentance won't be lacking.
WOMAN. Do you believe the Turk is coming over into Italy this year?[1]
FRATE. Yes, if you don't say your prayers.
WOMAN. My goodness! God help us! such deviltries! I'm so afraid of that impaling.[2] But I see here in church a woman who has some thread of mine; I want to go and speak to her. Good bye!
FRATE. Good bye!

1. *Especially after the Turkish capture of Otronto in 1480, Italians could fear invasion by the Turks. Such popular fear is suited to the stupid woman who expresses it. In a letter to Guicciardini (18 May 1521, translated below) Machiavelli classes it among* novelle da pancacce *(stories told by gossips on public benches). One of Giovambattista dell'Ottonaio's* CARNIVAL SONGS *begins:*

Chi vuol udir bugie o novellaccie,
venga ascoltar costoro
che stanno tutto il di su le pancaccie

(Anybody wanting to hear lies and tall stories should go to listen to those who sit all day on the public benches). (Charles S. Singleton, NUOVI CANTI CARNASCIALESCHI DEL RINASCIMENTO, *Modena, 1940, p. 61; See also* CARNIVAL SONGS, III. *34.)*

2. *A horrible Turkish method of execution given a bawdy suggestion.*

III.4

FRATE TIMOTEO, LIGURIO, MESSER NICIA

FRATE TIMOTEO [*to himself*]. The most liberal givers alive are the women, but the most vexing. Anybody who drives them away gets rid of vexation and profit; he who deals with them gets profit and vexation together. But it's a fact that there's no honey without flies. [*to* LIGURIO *and* NICIA] How goes it, my good men? Don't I recognize Messer Nicia?
LIGURIO. Speak loud, for he's got so deaf he can't hear anything now.
FRATE. You're welcome, sir.
LIG. Louder.
FRATE. Welcome.
MESSER NICIA. I'm glad to see you, Father.
FRATE. How goes it?
MESSER N. Very well.
LIG. Talk to me, Father, because you can't make him understand unless you fill the square with noise.

FRATE. What do you want with me?
LIG. Messer Nicia here and another worthy man, whom you'll hear about later, are going to have several hundred ducats laid out in charity.
MESSER N. A bloody flux on you!
LIG. [*aside to* NICIA]. Keep still, damn you; it won't be much. [*to* FRATE TIMOTEO] Don't be astonished, Father, at anything he says, because he doesn't hear, and sometimes he thinks he hears but his answers don't fit.
FRATE. Go ahead, then, and let him say what he wants to.
LIG. I have part of that money with me, and they've selected you to lay it out.
FRATE. I'll be delighted.
LIG. But it's necessary, before the money is turned over, for you to help us in a strange affair that has happened to Messer Nicia (and you are the only man who can help us) on which his family's reputation entirely depends.
FRATE. What is it?
LIG. I don't know whether you know Cammillo Calfucci, nephew to the Judge here.
FRATE. Yes, I know him.
LIG. A year ago, he went on business to France, and not having a wife (for she is dead), he left his daughter, old enough to get married, in the care of a convent; it isn't necessary now to give you its name.
FRATE. What happened?
LIG. It happened that either through the nuns' neglect or the girl's emptyheadedness, she is now four months pregnant, so that if it isn't prudently seen to, the Judge, the nuns, the girl, Cammillo, and the Calfucci family will be disgraced. The Judge is so much concerned about this scandal that he has vowed, if it doesn't become known, to give three hundred ducats for the love of God,
MESSER N. What poppycock!
LIG. [*aside to* NICIA]. Keep still. [*to* FRATE TIMOTEO] and to give it through you. And nobody but you and the abbess can help us out.
FRATE. How?
LIG. By persuading the abbess to give the girl a medicine to make her miscarry.
FRATE. That's something to think about.
LIG. See how much good will result from doing this. You keep up

the reputation of the nunnery, the girl, her relatives; you return a daughter to a father; you help out the Judge here and all his relatives; you carry on all that charitable work that these three hundred ducats'll make possible. And on the other side you injure only a piece of flesh not yet born, without sense, which can be lost in a thousand ways; and I believe that good is what does good to the largest number, and with which the largest number are pleased.[1]

FRATE. So be it, in God's name! Do what you want to, and let it all be done for God and charity. Tell me the name of the nunnery, give me the medicine, and—if you want to—that money, so I can begin to do good works.

LIG. Now you seem to me the churchman I thought you were. Take this part of the money. The nunnery is . . . But wait, there's a woman in the church who's beckoning to me. I'll come back at once; don't leave Messer Nicia; I want to speak a word or two to her.

*1. Here, dramatically perverted for a low purpose, is Machiavelli's clearest statement of the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. Cf. "the generality of the men of Italy" (*THE PRINCE *26, par. 1).*

III.5

FRATE TIMOTEO, MESSER NICIA

FRATE TIMOTEO. About this girl, how old is she?[1]

MESSER NICIA [*to himself*]. I'm dizzy.

FRATE. I say, how old is this girl?

MESSER N. May God send him trouble!

FRATE. Why?

MESSER N. Because he ought to have it.

FRATE. [*aside*]. I seem to be in a mess. I'm dealing with a crazy man and a deaf one. One runs away; the other doesn't hear. Yet if these aren't lead florins, I can use them better than they can. But there's Ligurio coming back.

1. In the translation of d'Avenel this speech runs: "Cette jeune fille, de combien est-elle enceinte?" Other renderings are to the same effect. Yet the preceding scene has given the answer: four months. Lexicons furnish no support for such a translation.

III.6

LIGURIO, FRATE TIMOTEO, MESSER NICIA

LIGURIO [*to* NICIA]. Keep still, Sir. [*to the* FRATE] Oh, I have great news, Father.
FRATE TIMOTEO. What?
LIG. That woman I spoke with told me the girl has miscarried all of herself.
FRATE [*aside*]. For certain, that charity money will go off like grease.[1]
LIG. What is it you're saying?
FRATE. I'm saying you ought so much the more to give that money to charity.
LIG. The gift'll be made when you want it, but you'll have to do something else to help the Judge here.
FRATE. What's that?
LIG. Something that'll be less blamed and gossiped about, more pleasing to us, more profitable for you.
FRATE. What is it? I'm under contract to you, and I seem to have got so intimate that there is nothing I won't do.
LIG. I prefer to tell you in the church, between you and me, if the Judge will be so good as to wait here. We'll come back soon.
MESSER NICIA. As the toad said to the harrow.[2]
FRATE. Come along.

1. *grease: grease in the fire.*
2. *the toad said to the harrow. See Machiavelli's letter to Guicciardini (Sept. 1525, no. 198).*

III.7

MESSER NICIA *alone*

Is it day or night? Am I awake or asleep? Am I drunk (though so far today I haven't had a thing to drink), so that I go along with this poppycock? No sooner have we said one thing to the friar than he says something else. Then he told me to act deaf, and I should have to stop up my ears like the Dane[1] if I were to keep from hearing the silly things he's said, and God knows what they're for. I am out twenty-five ducats, and not a thing has been said on my business,

1. *Ogier the Dane, a hero of romance, stopped his ears like Ulysses.*

and now he has planted me here with a dibble like a numskull.[2] But they're coming back, and the Devil take them if they haven't talked about my business.

2. with a dibble: like a planted seed, he can't go away. A zugo *(translated* numskull*) is a sort of friedcake. The whole is a proverb applied to a person left waiting without consideration.*

III.8

FRATE TIMOTEO, LIGURIO, MESSER NICIA

FRATE TIMOTEO. Have the women come. I know what I've got to do, and if my influence is enough, we'll finish this marriage business this evening.[1]

LIGURIO. Messer Nicia, Fra Timoteo is going to do everything. We must see that the women come.

MESSER NICIA. You make a new man of me. Will it be a boy?

LIG. A boy.

MESSER N. Love brings me to tears.

FRATE. Go on into the church; I'll wait here for the women. Stay in some place where they won't see you, and when they've gone I'll tell you what they said.

1. Perhaps Fra Timoteo uses the word marriage *as a euphemism, or perhaps Machiavelli intended it jocosely, as does Boccaccio in* DECAMERON *2. 7.*

III.9

FRATE TIMOTEO *alone*

I don't know which of us has bamboozled the other. This rascally Ligurio came to me with that first story to test me, so that if I didn't make a deal with him he wouldn't have told me this one. Thus they wouldn't expose their plan without gaining anything, and they didn't care about the false one. It's true that I've been bamboozled; but all the same this bamboozling brings me profit. Messer Nicia and Callimaco are rich, and in different ways there is much to be got from both of them. This affair is certain to be kept secret, because the telling of it is as serious for them as for me. However things go, I don't repent of it. It is true, though, that I fear there'll be difficulty, because Madam Lucretia is cautious and good; but I'll bamboozle her by using her goodness. For all women lack brains,

so when one of them knows enough to say two words, it makes her famous, because in a city of the blind, a man with one eye is Duke. But there she comes with her mother, who is certainly a bitch, and will be a great help to me in bringing her to what I want.

III.10

SOSTRATA, LUCRETIA

SOSTRATA. I believe you believe, my child, that I value your honor as much as anybody in the world, and I wouldn't advise you to do anything that isn't proper. I've said, and I say it again, that if Fra Timoteo tells you it isn't a thing to burden your conscience, you should do it without thinking about it.

LUCRETIA. I've always been afraid that Messer Nicia's wish to have children would make us commit some sin, and for this reason, whenever he's spoken to me of anything, I've always been suspicious and afraid, especially after what you know happened to me when I went to the Servi. But of all the things that have been tried, this seems to me the strangest, to have to submit my body to this shame, to be the cause that a man should die as the result of his shaming me, because if I were the only woman left in the world and the human race had to begin again from me, I can't believe that such a way to do it would be permitted to me.

SOST. I can't discuss so many things with you, my child. Talk with the Frate, see what he says, and then do what he recommends and we do, and everybody does who's interested in you.

LUCR. I'm sweating with anxiety.

III.11

FRATE TIMOTEO, LUCRETIA, SOSTRATA

FRATE TIMOTEO. You're welcome! I know what you want to learn from me, because Messer Nicia has spoken to me. In truth I've been at my books more than two hours, studying this case, and in my researches I've found many things that support us both in detail and in general.

LUCRETIA. Are you speaking seriously or are you joking?

FRATE. Oh, Madam Lucretia, are these things to be joked about?

Don't you know me yet?

LUCR. Yes, Father, but this seems to me the strangest thing that ever was heard of.

FRATE. Madam, I believe you, but I don't want you to say so any more. There are many things that at a distance seem terrible, unbearable, strange, yet when you get close to them they seem mild, bearable, normal; hence, we say that fears are worse than evils themselves; and this is one of that sort.

LUCR. God grant it!

FRATE. I want to go back to what I said earlier. You must, as to conscience, accept this rule: where a good is certain and an evil uncertain, you ought never to give up the good for fear of the evil. Here you have a certain good, that you will become pregnant, gain a soul for the Lord. The uncertain evil is that the man who lies with you after you take the medicine may die; yet there are also those who don't die. But because the matter is uncertain, it's not a good thing for Messer Nicia to run this risk. As to the action, the notion that it's a sin is a fairy story, because the will is what sins, not the body, and what would make it a sin would be your husband's displeasure, but you will be pleasing him; or if you should take pleasure in it, but you will get displeasure from it. Besides this, one's purpose must be considered in everything; your purpose is to fill a seat in paradise, to please your husband. The Bible says that Lot's daughters, thinking that they alone were left in the world, had to do with their father, and because their intention was good, they did not sin.

LUCR. What are you persuading me to?

SOST. Be persuaded, my child. Don't you see that a woman who doesn't have any children doesn't have any home? When her husband dies, she is left wretched, deserted by everybody.

FRATE. I swear to you, Madam, by this consecrated breast, that submitting to your husband in this affair is as much a matter of conscience as eating meat on Wednesday, which is a sin that goes away with holy water.[1]

LUCR. To what are you bringing me, Father?

FRATE. I am bringing you to what will give you reason always to pray to God for me, and you will be more pleased next year than now.

1. *Wednesdays are fast days during the four weeks of the season of Advent.*

SOST. She will do what you want. I am going to put her to bed this evening myself. [*to* LUCRETIA] What are you afraid of, snotty nose? There are fifty women in this city who would lift their hands to Heaven for it.[2]

LUCR. I consent; but I don't believe I shall be alive at all tomorrow morning.

FRATE. Do not fear, my daughter. I shall pray to God for you; I shall repeat the prayer of the angel Raphael, so he will be with you.[3] Go with assurance and get ready for this secret act, because it's now evening.

SOST. Good bye, Father.

LUCR. God and Our Lady help me and keep me from shame!

2. In thanksgiving.

3. As, according to the Apocryphal book of Tobit, he was with Tobias.

III.12

FRATE TIMOTEO, LIGURIO, MESSER NICIA

FRATE TIMOTEO. O Ligurio, come out.

LIGURIO. How goes it?

FRATE. Well. They've gone home ready to do everything, and there'll be no difficulty, because her mother'll go to stay with her, and intends to put her to bed herself.

MESSER NICIA. Are you telling the truth?

FRATE. Well, well, you're cured of your deafness.

LIG. San Clemente has shown him favor.

FRATE. It would be a good thing to put up a votive image there,[1] to start a crowd coming so I could share your gain with you.

MESSER N. We're getting off on trifles. Will my wife make any difficulty about doing what I want?

FRATE. No, I tell you.

MESSER N. I'm the happiest man in the world.

FRATE. I believe it. You will peck up a boy for yourself.[2] Who doesn't have, let him go without.[3]

LIG. Go to your prayers, Father, and if we need anything else, we'll

1. A waxen image of an ear at San Clemente's altar, as a sign of thanksgiving for his cure.

2. An expression derived from a bird's use of its beak, meaning to gain with effort or shrewdness.

3. Proverbial for "Who wants a thing and cannot get it, let him go without."

come for you. You, Sir, go to your wife, to keep her firm in this decision, and I'll tell Doctor Callimaco, so that he'll send you the medicine. And at seven o'clock let me see you again, to arrange what ought to be done at ten.

MESSER N. All right. Good bye.

FRATE. Good wishes.

CANZONE

[after the third act]

Pleasant indeed is the trick
carried on to the dear conclusion that has been dreamed of,
that takes one out of distress
and makes sweet every bitter thing that has been tasted.
Oh restorative splendid and rare,
you show the straight path to wandering souls;
you, O Love, with your great power
by making others blessed make them rich;
you conquer, with your sacred counsels alone,
rocks, enchantments, and poisons.

IV.1

CALLIMACO *alone*

I wish I could just know what those fellows have done. Can it be that I shan't see Ligurio again? It's not just five o'clock; it's six. How anxious I've been and still am! It's true that Fortune and Nature keep their account balanced; the first never does you a good turn that on the other side something bad doesn't come up. The more my hope has grown, the more my fear has grown. How wretched I am! How can I ever live in such distress and disturbed by these fears and hopes? I'm a ship tossed by two opposing winds, which is the more in danger the closer she comes to port. Messer Nicia's folly makes me hope; Lucretia's caution and firmness make me fear. Woe is me! I can't find rest anywhere! Sometimes I try to conquer my feelings; I reproach myself for this excitement and say to myself: "What are you doing? Are you crazy? When you get her,

what'll it amount to? You'll recognize your mistake; you'll regret the labor and worry you've gone through. Don't you know how little good a man finds in the things he has longed for, compared with what he expected to find? On the other hand, the worst you can get from it is that you'll die and go to Hell. But how many others have died! And in Hell how many worthy men there are![1] Are you ashamed to go there? Face your fortune; run away from trouble, but if you can't run away from it, bear it like a man; don't be downcast; don't be a coward like a woman." And so I give myself courage, but not for long, because on every side I'm attacked by such a desire to be with her just once that I feel as though my whole body from the soles of my feet to my head has gone wrong: my legs tremble, my vitals are shaken, my heart is torn out of my breast, my arms lose their strength, my tongue falls silent, my eyes are dazzled, my brain whirls.[2] If I could only find Ligurio, I should have somebody to pour out my feelings to. But there he is coming toward me, fast. This man's report'll either make me live a little longer or die and be done with it.

1. *Compare one of the sayings of Castruccio Castracani, given at the end of his* LIFE.
2. *Callimaco's description is imitated from Catullus 51 (*Ille mi par*).*

IV.2

LIGURIO, CALLIMACO

LIGURIO [*to himself*]. I've never wanted to find Callimaco so much and I've never had so much trouble in finding him. If I were taking him bad news, I should have met him straight off. I have been at his house, in the Square, in the Market-place, at the Spini Bench, at the Tornaquinci Loggia, and I haven't found him. These lovers walk on quicksilver; they can't stand still.

CALLIMACO [*to himself*]. There's Ligurio coming along looking this way; he must be hunting for me.[1] Why do I keep waiting, instead of calling him? He seems in good spirits too. [*to* LIGURIO] Oh, Ligurio, Ligurio!

LIG. Oh Callimaco, where've you been?

CAL. What's the news?

LIG. Good.

1. *Added by Ruscelli in his edition (Venice, 1554).*

CAL. Really good?
LIG. The very best.
CAL. Is Lucretia willing?
LIG. Yes.
CAL. The Friar did what was needed?
LIG. He did.
CAL. Oh, blessed Friar! I shall always pray to God for him.
LIG. Oh fine! As though God granted his grace in evil things as well as good ones! The Friar will want more than prayers.
CAL. What will he want?
LIG. Money.
CAL. Let him have it. How much have you promised him?
LIG. Three hundred ducats.
CAL. That was right.
LIG. The Judge has paid him twenty-five.
CAL. What?
LIG. It's enough for you that he's paid them.
CAL. What's Lucretia's mother done?
LIG. Pretty nearly all of it. When she got the idea that her daughter could have this pleasant night without sin, she didn't stop begging, ordering, encouraging Lucretia until she took her to the Friar, and there she acted in such a way that she consented.
CAL. Oh, God! For what merits of mine do I deserve so many good things? I'm ready to die for happiness.
LIG. What a man this is! Now for happiness, now for sorrow—this fellow wants to die no matter what. Have you the medicine ready?
CAL. Yes, I have.
LIG. What are you going to send him?
CAL. A glass of hypocras, that is good to settle the stomach, cheers the brain.—Oh! Oh! I am ruined.
LIG. What is it? what can it be?
CAL. There's no help for it.
LIG. What the devil is it?
CAL. We haven't done a thing; I've walled myself up in an oven.[2]
LIG. How? Why don't you tell? Take your hands away from your face.

2. *I am ruined by my own carelessness.*

CAL. Don't you know that I told Messer Nicia that you, he, Siro, and I would catch somebody to put in bed with his wife?
LIG. What of that?
CAL. How can you say "What of that?" If I'm with you, I can't be the one to be caught; if I'm not with you, he'll realize the trick.
LIG. You're right, but isn't there a way out?
CAL. I don't think so.
LIG. Of course there is.
CAL. How?
LIG. I want to think about it a little.
CAL. Here's a pretty how-de-do; I'm in fine shape if you've got to make plans now.
LIG. I have it.
CAL. What is it?
LIG. I'll make the Friar, who's helped us up to now, do this too.
CAL. In what way?
LIG. We've all got to disguise ourselves. I'll make the Friar disguise himself; he'll imitate your voice, your face, your dress; I'll tell the Judge it's you and he'll believe it.
CAL. It suits me, but what shall I do?
LIG. I count on you to put on a short jacket and come with a lute in your hand, near the corner of his house, singing a little song.
CAL. With my face uncovered?
LIG. Yes, for if you wear a mask, he'll get suspicious.
CAL. He'll know me.
LIG. He won't, because I expect you to twist your face, to open and stretch your mouth or show your teeth, and close one eye. Try a little.
CAL. Is this it?
LIG. No.
CAL. This?
LIG. It isn't enough.
CAL. Like this?
LIG. Yes, yes, remember that. I've a false nose at home; I want you to wear it.
CAL. All right, what then?
LIG. When you reach the corner, we'll be there, we'll snatch your lute, seize you, spin you around, take you into the house, put you in the bed. You're to do the rest for yourself.
CAL. It's certain to be carried through!

LIG. So far you will be carried, but to manage so you'll return later to the same place is your affair, not ours.
CAL. What?
LIG. You must win her over in the course of this night, and before you leave, let her know who you are, confess the trick to her, show her your love for her, tell her of the happiness you wish her, show her that without disgrace she can be your friend, and with great disgrace your enemy. It's impossible she'll not come to an understanding with you, and that she'll want this night to stand alone.
CAL. Do you believe that?
LIG. I'm sure of it. But let's not lose any more time; it's eight o'clock already. Call Siro, send the medicine to Messer Nicia, wait for me in your house. I'll go for the Friar, make him disguise himself and bring him here, and we'll find the Judge and do what's left.
CAL. That's good; go ahead.

IV.3

CALLIMACO, SIRO

CALLIMACO. Oh Siro!
SIRO. Sir!
CAL. Come here.
SIRO. Here I am.
CAL. Get that silver cup that's in the cupboard in my room, put a little cloth over it, bring it to me, and look out that you don't upset it on the way.
SIRO. Very good, sir. [*He goes for the cup.*]
CAL. [*to himself*]. This fellow's been with me for ten years and has always been a faithful servant. I believe he'll show fidelity in this business too, and though I haven't told him about this trick, he guesses it for himself, for he's something of a rascal, and I see that he's adapting himself to it.
SIRO. Here it is.
CAL. That's good. Be quick, go to Messer Nicia's house and say that this is the medicine his wife has to take right after supper—and the earlier she has supper the better—and that we'll be on the corner as arranged, at the time when he's going to be there. Hurry.
SIRO. Here I go.

CAL. Listen. If he wants you to wait for him, wait, and come here with him. If he doesn't want you, come back here to me, after you have given it to him and delivered the message.
SIRO. Yes, sir.

IV.4

CALLIMACO *alone*

I'm waiting until Ligurio comes back with the Friar. And anybody who says it's hard to wait is telling the truth. I'm losing ten pounds every hour, thinking where I am now and where it's possible I'll be two hours from now, and afraid something'll come up to spoil my plan. If that should happen, this'll be the last night of my life, for I'll throw myself into the Arno, or I'll hang myself, or I'll throw myself from these windows, or I'll stab myself with a knife at her door. I'll do something so I'll live no longer. But do I see Ligurio? It's he; he has a man with him that seems humpbacked, lame; it certainly must be the Friar disguised. Oh, friars! If you know one of them, you know them all. Who is the other man who's come up to them? It looks like Siro, who's already done my errand to the Judge. It's he. I'll wait for them here so as to join them.

IV.5

SIRO, LIGURIO, *the* FRATE *disguised,* CALLIMACO

SIRO [*to* LIGURIO; *the* FRATE *is just out of hearing*]. Who's that with you, Ligurio?
LIGURIO. A worthy man.
SIRO. Is he lame or is he pretending?
LIG. Look at something else.
SIRO. Oh, he has the face of a big rascal.
LIG. Oh, keep still; you're making a nuisance of yourself. Where's Callimaco?
CALLIMACO. Here I am. I'm glad to see you.
LIG. Oh Callimaco, give this little fool of a Siro some instructions; he has already said a thousand foolish things.
CAL. Siro, listen to me. This evening you must do everything Ligurio tells you to, and when he gives you an order, imagine that I

am speaking. And what you see, touch, or hear you must keep absolutely secret, in so far as you value my property, my honor, my life and your own welfare.
SIRO. Very good, sir.
CAL. Did you give the cup to the Judge?
SIRO. Yes, sir.
CAL. What did he say?
SIRO. That everything is now arranged.
FRATE TIMOTEO. Is this Callimaco?
CAL. I am, at your service. Let's consider our business settled; you can treat me and all my property as though they were your own.
FRATE. I understand, and I believe it, and I've undertaken to do something for you that I wouldn't have done for any other man in the world.
CAL. You'll not lose your labor.
FRATE. It's enough that you wish me well.
LIG. Let's have no more ceremonies. We'll go and disguise ourselves, Siro and I. You, Callimaco, come with us, so you can go and do your business. The Frate will wait for us here; we'll come back at once and go for Messer Nicia.
CAL. What you say's right. Let's go.
FRATE. I'll wait for you.

IV.6

The FRATE, *alone in disguise*

They tell the truth who say that bad company brings men to the gallows; and many times one comes to harm by being too accommodating and too good, as well as by being too bad.[1] God knows I wasn't thinking of harming anybody; I was staying in my cell, saying my offices, dealing with my penitents. Then all at once this devil of a Ligurio turned up; he made me put my finger in a sin, then I have put in my arm and my whole body, and I don't know yet where I am going to end. Yet I comfort myself that when an affair's important to many, many have to be careful about it. But here are Ligurio and that servant coming back.

1. *Cf.* THE PRINCE *19. Good deeds may produce hatred.*

IV.7

FRATE TIMOTEO, LIGURIO, SIRO

FRATE TIMOTEO. Welcome back!
LIGURIO. Are we in good shape?
FRATE. Excellent.
LIG. We still don't have the Judge. Let's go to his house. It's after nine o'clock; come on.
SIRO. Who's that opening his door? Is it his servant?
LIG. No, it's he, himself. Ha, ha, ha, ha.
SIRO. What are you laughing at?
LIG. Who wouldn't laugh? He's wearing a little jacket that doesn't cover his ass. What the devil's he got on his head? It looks like one of those furs that canons wear. And he has a little sword at his belt. Um, um, he's muttering something or other. Let's move to one side, and we'll hear some hard-luck story about his wife.

IV.8

MESSER NICIA *disguised*

How many sickening things this crazy wife of mine has done! She's sent the maid to her mother's house, and the man to the country. I praise her for this, but I certainly don't praise her that before she made up her mind to go to bed she made so many squeamish objections: "I don't want . . . . What shall I do? . . . What are you making me do? . . . Oh me! mamma dear!" And if her mother hadn't talked the father of the leek to her,[1] she wouldn't have got into that bed. Plague take her! I like to see women pretty fussy, but not too much; for she's taken our heads off, kitten-witted as she is! Then if anybody should say: "Let the wisest woman in Florence be hanged," she would say: "What have I done?" I know that Pasquina will go into Arezzo,[2] and before I leave the game I

1. *talked the father of the leek. Varchi explains it as meaning "to rebuke one and accuse him freely and declare to him what is going to happen to him if he does not change" (*ERCOLANO *99). In one of Machiavelli's* EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO THE TEN OF BALIÀ, *it is said: "Fra Girolamo [Savonarola] returned from a visit to the King [of France]; he said he had read the King the father of the leek" (*OPERE, *ed. Passerini and Milanesi, 2. 251).*

2. *Pasquina will go into Arezzo: proverbial for "the thing will be done." But there seems to be a specific application to the coition of Callimaco and Lucretia. Cf. Messer Mazzo and Monte Nero in* DECAMERON *6, introd.*

shall be able to say like Monna Ghinga:[3] "Because I've seen it, with these hands."[4] I'm fine; who would recognize me? I seem bigger, younger, more agile; no woman anywhere would take bed-money from me. But where shall I find those fellows?

3. Monna Ghinga: apparently a proverbial speaker.

4. A reference to the expression, "touch with the hands," meaning to make sure of. Cf. Act V, sc. 2.

IV.9

LIGURIO, MESSER NICIA, *the* FRATE *disguised*, SIRO

LIGURIO. Good evening, sir.

MESSER NICIA. Oh, uh, uh.

LIG. Don't be afraid; we're the men you want.

MESSER N. Oh, here you all are. If I hadn't recognized you at once, I'd have given you as straight a thrust as I could, with this sword. You are Ligurio? and you are Siro? and that other, is he the Doctor, huh?

LIG. Yes, Sir.

MESSER N. Imagine. Oh! if he isn't well disguised! Vaquattù wouldn't know him.[1]

LIG. I've had him put two nuts in his mouth so he won't be recognized by his voice.

MESSER N. You're careless.

LIG. Why?

MESSER N. Why didn't you tell me that earlier? For I'd have put two in my mouth as well, and you know whether it's important not to be recognized by our voices.

LIG. Take this and put it in your mouth.

MESSER N. What is it?

LIG. A ball of wax.

MESSER N. Oh wh——thu, thu, pu, pu, sp, sp——Plague take you, you big rascal!

LIG. I beg your pardon; I've given you the wrong one, without realizing it.

MESSER N. Pthu, pthu, pu, pu——What was it, what was it?

LIG. Aloes.

1. Vaquattù: A proverbial man of great power and shrewdness. The name means "Come here, you."

MESSER N. Damn you! Sp, sp, Pthu——Doctor, why don't you say anything.
FRATE. Ligurio has made me mad.
MESSER N. Oh! how well you diguise your voice!
LIG. Let's not lose any more time here. I'm going to be captain and draw up the army for battle. On the right horn Callimaco shall be in command, myself on the left, between the two horns will be the Judge here;[2] Siro will be the rear-guard and reinforce any squadron that falls back. The battle-cry will be Saint Cuckoo.[3]
MESSER N. Who is Saint Cuckoo?
LIG. He's the saint most honored in France. Let's march on and set our ambush at this corner. Keep still and listen; I hear a lute.
MESSER N. That's what it is. What's the best thing to do?
LIG. We ought to send a scout ahead to find out who it is, and we'll act according to his report.
MESSER N. Who'll go?
LIG. Go along, Siro. You know what you need to do. Be cautious, take a good look, hurry back, make your report.
SIRO. I understand.
MESSER N. I shouldn't like to catch a crab, such as some weak old fellow or invalid, and have to play this over again tomorrow night.
LIG. Never fear, Siro's a capable man. There he is, coming back. What have you found, Siro?
SIRO. He's the prettiest young chap you ever saw. He isn't twenty-five and he's coming along alone in a short jacket playing a lute.
MESSER N. He's what we want, if you're telling the truth. But take care that this broth isn't upset all over you.
SIRO. It's just as I've told you.
LIG. Wait till he gets by this corner and at once we'll be on him.
MESSER N. Come over here, Doctor; you seem to me to be made of wood. Here he is.

2. *horns: In English more commonly* wings. *It is fitting that the judge, who is to be cuckolded, should be between the horns.*

3. *The cuckoo then, on every tree,*
Mocks married men; for thus sings he,
Cuckoo;
Cuckoo, cuckoo: O, word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear!
(Love's Labour's Lost, *end*). *Nicia is too stupid to get the reference.*

CALLIMACO [*sings*]. May the devil manage to come to your bed,
Since I cannot come there.
And may he break two ribs in your chest
And the other parts that God has made you.
And may he drag you through mountains and valleys
And take off the tops of your shoulders.[4]

LIG. Stand still. Give that lute here.

CAL. Oh! What have I done?

MESSER N. You'll find out. Cover his head, muffle him up.

LIG. Spin him around.

MESSER N. Give him another whirl; give him one more. Take him into the house.

FRATE. Messer Nicia, I'm going to bed, for my head aches fit to kill me. And if it isn't necessary, I'll not come back tomorrow morning.

MESSER N. Yes, Doctor; don't come back; we can get on by ourselves.

4. The texts give only two lines of this song. For the rest see Debenedetti's edition (Biblioteca Romanica), p. 78.

IV.10

FRATE TIMOTEO *alone*

They're shut up in the house, and I'll go to the monastery. And you, spectators, don't find fault with us, because all night nobody here will get any sleep, so the acts aren't separated by time for it.[1] I'll repeat the office;[2] Ligurio and Siro will have supper, because they haven't eaten today; the Judge will go from the bedroom into the hall, so the kitchen will be clear. Callimaco and Madam Lucretia'll not get any sleep, because I know that if I were he and you were she, we wouldn't get any sleep.

1. Dramatic theory, here ridiculed by Machiavelli, required that actions such as journeys—in this instance, sleep—, that couldn't be represented on the stage, should be thought of as taking place between the acts, which might thus be separated by a number of hours, so long as the entire comedy was not prolonged beyond twenty-four. Actually, the action of the MANDRAGOLA *is here interrupted.*

2. The church service.

CANZONE

[after the fourth act]

Oh sweet night, oh holy
and quiet hours of night,
you that couple yearning lovers;
in you all pleasures join,
so you are the only cause that renders souls blessed.
To the troops of lovers you give fit reward
for their long drudgery.
You, oh happy hours,
set every icy heart
afire with love.

V.1

FRATE TIMOTEO *alone*

All night I haven't shut an eye, I'm so eager to learn how Callimaco and the others have got on; I've been attending to various things to use up the time; I said matins, read a life of the Holy Fathers, went into the church and lit a lamp that had gone out, changed the veil of a Madonna who works miracles. How many times I have told these friars to keep her clean! And then they are puzzled if worship falls off. I remember when there were five hundred images here, and today there're not twenty. We're to blame, because we haven't known how to keep up her reputation. We used to go in procession before her every evening after compline, and have lauds sung for her every Saturday. We were always making vows to her then, so that folks would see new images before her; in confession we all the time encouraged men and women to make vows to her. Now none of these things is done, and then we are puzzled if business gets slack. Oh how few brains these friars of mine have! But I hear a big noise from Messer Nicia's house. There they come, sure enough. They are bringing out the prisoner. I've got here at the right time. They've really waited until the very last drop in the bottle;[1] it's just daybreak. I'm going to stand still and hear what they say, without showing myself.

1. *the last drop in the bottle: to the bitter end.*

V.2

MESSER NICIA, CALLIMACO, LIGURIO, SIRO

MESSER NICIA. You hold him on that side and I'll hold him on this one; and you, Siro, hang on to his coat from behind.
CALLIMACO. Don't hurt me.
LIGURIO. Don't be afraid, just take yourself away.
MESSER N. Let's not go any farther.
LIG. You're right; get rid of him here. Whirl him around twice, so he won't know where he's come from. Spin him, Siro.
SIRO. Here goes.
MESSER N. Spin him again.
SIRO. That's done.
CAL. My lute!
LIG. Be off, rascal, be off. If I hear of your talking, I'll cut your throat.
MESSER N. How he runs! Let's go and get out of these clothes. And it'll be a good thing for all of us to go out early, so it won't look as though we've been awake all night.
LIG. That's a good notion.
MESSER N. You and Siro find Doctor Callimaco and tell him how well the affair has come out.
LIG. What can we tell him? We don't know a thing. You remember that when we got into the house we went into the cellar to drink. You and your mother-in-law were busy with him, and we didn't see you again until now, when you called us to put him out.
MESSER N. That's true. Oh, I can tell you some fine things. My wife was in bed in the dark. Sostrata was waiting for me at the fire. I got there with this young fellow, and so that nothing should be done under a hood,[1] I took him into a store room I have off the hall where there was a shaded lamp; it threw out some light, but in such a way he couldn't get a look at my face.
LIG. You were clever about that.
MESSER N. I told him to undress; he held back; I turned on him like a dog, so that he thought it was taking him a thousand years to get his clothes off; and he stood naked. His face is ugly. He had a

1. *under a hood: unseen.*

great big nose, a twisted mouth; but you never saw finer skin, white, soft, smooth; and don't ask about the other things.

LIG. It's just as well not to talk about them. Why did you need to look him all over?

MESSER N. You're asking for the iambic.[2] Since I'd put my hands into the dough, I wanted to go to the bottom of it; then I wanted to see if he was healthy; if he had had syphilis, where would I have been? You're talking nonsense.

LIG. You're right.

MESSER N. When I had seen he was healthy, I had him follow me, and in the dark I took him into the bedroom; I put him in the bed, and before I would go away I wanted to touch with my hands how the thing was going,[3] for I am not used to being made to take fireflies for lanterns.[4]

LIG. What sense you've shown in managing this affair!

MESSER N. When I'd touched and made sure of everything, I went out of the bedroom and locked the door and went to my mother-in-law, who was by the fire, and we kept on talking all night.

LIG. What did you talk about?

MESSER N. Lucretia's stupidity, and how much better it would have been if she'd given in at first without so many goings and comings. Then we talked about the baby—for I imagine I have him in my arms all the time, the darling—until I heard the clock strike seven, and since I was afraid day would come on, I went into the bedchamber. And what do you think? I couldn't make that big rascal get up.

LIG. I believe you.

MESSER N. He'd liked his rich diet. Yet he got up, I called you, and we led him out.

LIG. The affair's gone well.

MESSER N. What do you think troubles me about it?

LIG. What?

*2. Varchi explains this as one of the things said to a person who is trying to persuade us of something that we aren't going to believe, to get him out of our sight and get that boredom out of our hearing (*ERCOLANO *134).*

3. touch with my hands: a common figure for making sure of something. Here it becomes comically literal.

*4. Explained by Varchi as to make what does not exist appear to exist, and to make small things big (*ERCOLANO *55).*

MESSER N. That poor boy, who's got to die so soon and whom this night is going to cost so dear.
LIG. Oh, don't worry about that. Let him take care of it.
MESSER N. That's true. But it does seem to me a thousand years until I can see Doctor Callimaco and tell him how glad I am.
LIG. He'll come out in an hour or so. But it's bright daylight. We'll go and undress; what'll you do?
MESSER N. I'll go into the house too and put on my best clothes. I'll have my wife get up and bathe and have her go to the church, so as to be churched.[5] I should like you and Callimaco to be there, and all of us could speak to the Frate, to thank him and pay him back for the good he's done us.
LIG. That's a good suggestion; we'll do it.

5. A formula for the ceremonies of the first visit to church after childbirth. Nicia anticipates.

V.3

FRATE TIMOTEO *alone*

I've heard their talk and I like it, considering how stupid this judge is; the very last part was specially pleasing. And since they're coming to visit me at home, I won't stay here any longer but'll wait for them in the church, where my stock-in-trade'll fetch a higher price. But who's coming out of that house? I'm sure it's Ligurio, and that must be Callimaco with him. I don't want them to see me here, for the reasons I've given. Besides, if they don't come to my place, there'll always be time to go to theirs.

V.4

CALLIMACO, LIGURIO

CALLIMACO. As I told you, my Ligurio, I was anxious until three o'clock, and though I was having a very good time, it didn't seem to me right. But then I made myself known to her and made her understand my love for her, and how easily, because her husband is so stupid, we could live in happiness without any scandal, and promised her that when God removed him, I'd take her as my wife. Besides my sound reasons, too, she felt what a difference there is between the way I lie with her and the way Nicia does, and between

the kisses of a young lover and those of an old husband. After some sighs she said: "Your cleverness, my husband's stupidity, my mother's folly, and my confessor's rascality have brought me to do what I never would have done of myself. So I'm forced to judge that it comes from Heaven's wish that has ordered it so, and I'm not strong enough to refuse what Heaven wills me to accept. I take you then for lord, master, guide; you are my father, you are my defender; I want you as my chief good; and what my husband has asked for one night, I intend him to have always. You'll make yourself his best friend; you'll go to the church this morning, and from there you'll come to have dinner with us; after that your comings and stayings'll be as you like, and we can be together at any time without suspicion." When I heard these words, I was ready to die with their sweetness. I couldn't answer with even a little of what I tried to. So I'm the happiest and most fortunate man who ever lived; and if I should never lose this happiness through either death or time, I should be more blissful than the blessed, happier than the saints above.

LIGURIO. I rejoice in all your happiness, and what I foretold has come about for you to the dot. But what'll we do now?

CAL. Let's go to the church, for I've promised to be there, and she'll be coming, and her mother and the Judge.

LIG. I see his door opening; there they are; they're coming out, and the Judge is behind them.

CAL. Let's go into the church and wait there.

V.5

MESSER NICIA, LUCRETIA, SOSTRATA

MESSER NICIA. Lucretia, I believe it's good to do things in the fear of God, not like a mad woman.

LUCRETIA. What's got to be done, now?

MESSER N. See how she answers. She acts like a fighting cock.

SOSTRATA. Don't be astonished at it; she is a bit indignant.

LUCR. What are you trying to say?

MESSER N. I'm saying I'd better go ahead and speak to the Frate and tell him to meet us at the church door, to lead you to the churching, because this morning it's exactly as though you were born a second time.

LUCR. Why don't you go?
MESSER N. You're very lively this morning. [*to* SOSTRATA] Last evening she acted half dead.
LUCR. Thanks to you.
SOST. Go and find the Friar. But you don't need to; he's outside the church.
MESSER N. So he is.

V.6

FRATE TIMOTEO, MESSER NICIA, LUCRETIA, CALLIMACO, LIGURIO, SOSTRATA

FRATE TIMOTEO [*aside*]. I'm coming out here because Callimaco and Ligurio have told me that the Judge and the women are coming to church.
MESSER NICIA. *Bona dies*, Father.
FRATE. You're welcome, and may such happiness be yours, Madam, that God will give you a fine boy.
LUCRETIA. God grant it.
FRATE. Of course he'll grant it.
MESSER N. Do I see Ligurio and Doctor Callimaco in the church?
FRATE. Yes, sir.
MESSER N. Beckon to them.
FRATE. Come here.
CALLIMACO. God be with you!
MESSER N. Doctor, let me present you to my wife.
CAL. With pleasure.
MESSER N. Lucretia, this is the man who'll cause us to have a staff to support our old age.
LUCR. I'm delighted to meet him and want him to be our closest friend.
MESSER N. Now bless you. And I want him and Ligurio to come and have dinner with us this noon.
LUCR. Yes, indeed.
MESSER N. And I'm going to give them the key of the room on the ground floor in the loggia, so they can come there when it's convenient, because they don't have women at home and live like animals.

CAL. I accept it, to use it when I like.
FRATE. Am I going to get some money for charity?
MESSER N. Have no fears, domine; it will be sent to you today.
LIGURIO. Doesn't anybody remember Siro?
MESSER N. Let him ask; what I have is his. You, Lucretia, how many grossi are you going to give the Frate for your churching?
LUCR. You give him ten.
MESSER N. Deuce take me!
FRATE. Madam Sostrata, to my eye you've put a new shoot on the old tree.[1]
SOSTRATA. Who wouldn't be happy?
FRATE. Let's all go into the church; there we'll say the usual prayer. Then after the office you can have your dinner when you want to. [*to the audience*] You who're waiting, don't wait any longer for us to come out. The office is long; I'll be staying in the church, and they'll go home by the side door.[2] Good bye.

1. *a new shoot on the old tree: you look younger.*
2. *As at Florence from Santa Croce or Santa Maria del Fiore.*